

REMARKS

Applicants request favorable reconsideration of this application in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks. Claims 1-18 were pending in the application and were rejected in the Office Action. By way of this amendment, Applicants have: (a) amended claims 2, 4-6, 8, 10-12, 14, and 16-18, without adding new matter; and (b) cancelled claims 1, 3, 7, 9, 13, and 15, without prejudice or disclaimer. Accordingly, claims 2, 4-6, 8, 10-12, 14, and 16-18 are respectfully presented for further consideration.

Applicants appreciate the positive indication of allowable subject matter in claims 4, 5, 10, 11, 16, and 17. In response to this positive indication, claims 4, 10, and 16 have been amended to be in independent claim format (and to resolve various 35 U.S.C. § 112 issues, which are later discussed in detail). In addition, claims 5, 11, and 17 have been amended to depend from claims 4, 10, and 16, respectively. Accordingly, claims 4, 5, 10, 11, 16, and 17 should be in condition for allowance.

1. Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112

The Examiner rejected: (a) claims 4, 5, 10, 11, 16, and 17 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, ¶ 1; and (b) claims 1-18 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, ¶ 2 as a result of various informalities in claims 1, 4, 7, 10, 13, and 16. Applicants respectfully submit that each of these rejections is now moot due to the amendments made herein to the claims. Accordingly, a withdrawal of these rejections is both warranted and earnestly solicited.

2. Rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

The Examiner rejected claims 1-3, 6-9, 12-15, and 18 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being obvious in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,115,695 ("Wakahara"). Without acquiescing to the propriety of this rejection, Applicants submit that the rejection is now moot due with respect to claims 1, 3, 7, 9, 13, and 15, due to the cancellation thereof, without prejudice or disclaimer. In addition, the rejection is also moot with respect to: (a) claims 2 and 6, which have been amended to depend from allowable claim 4; (b) claims 8 and 12, which have been amended to depend from allowable claim 10; and (c) claims 14 and 18, which have been amended to depend from allowable claim 16. As the rejection of each of the claims under § 103(a) as being obvious in view of Wakahara is now moot, Applicants respectfully request a withdrawal of this rejection.

CONCLUSION

For the aforementioned reasons, claims 2, 4-6, 8, 10-12, 14, and 16-18 are now in condition for allowance. A Notice of Allowance at an early date is respectfully requested. The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned if such communication would expedite the prosecution of the application.

Respectfully submitted,

Date JUN 08 2005

By



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THE COMMISSIONER IS HEREBY AUTHORIZED TO CHARGE ANY ADDITIONAL FEES WHICH MAY BE REQUIRED REGARDING THIS APPLICATION UNDER 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16-1.17, OR CREDIT ANY OVERPAYMENT, TO DEPOSIT ACCOUNT NO. 19-0741. SHOULD NO PROPER PAYMENT BE ENCLOSED HEREWITH, AS BY A CHECK BEING IN THE WRONG AMOUNT, UNSIGNED, POST-DATED, OTHERWISE IMPROPER OR INFORMAL OR EVEN ENTIRELY MISSING, THE COMMISSIONER IS AUTHORIZED TO CHARGE THE UNPAID AMOUNT TO DEPOSIT ACCOUNT NO. 19-0741. IF ANY EXTENSIONS OF TIME ARE NEEDED FOR TIMELY ACCEPTANCE OF PAPERS SUBMITTED HEREWITH, APPLICANT HEREBY PETITIONS FOR SUCH EXTENSION UNDER 37 C.F.R. § 1.136 AND AUTHORIZES PAYMENT OF ANY SUCH EXTENSIONS FEES TO DEPOSIT ACCOUNT NO. 19-0741.